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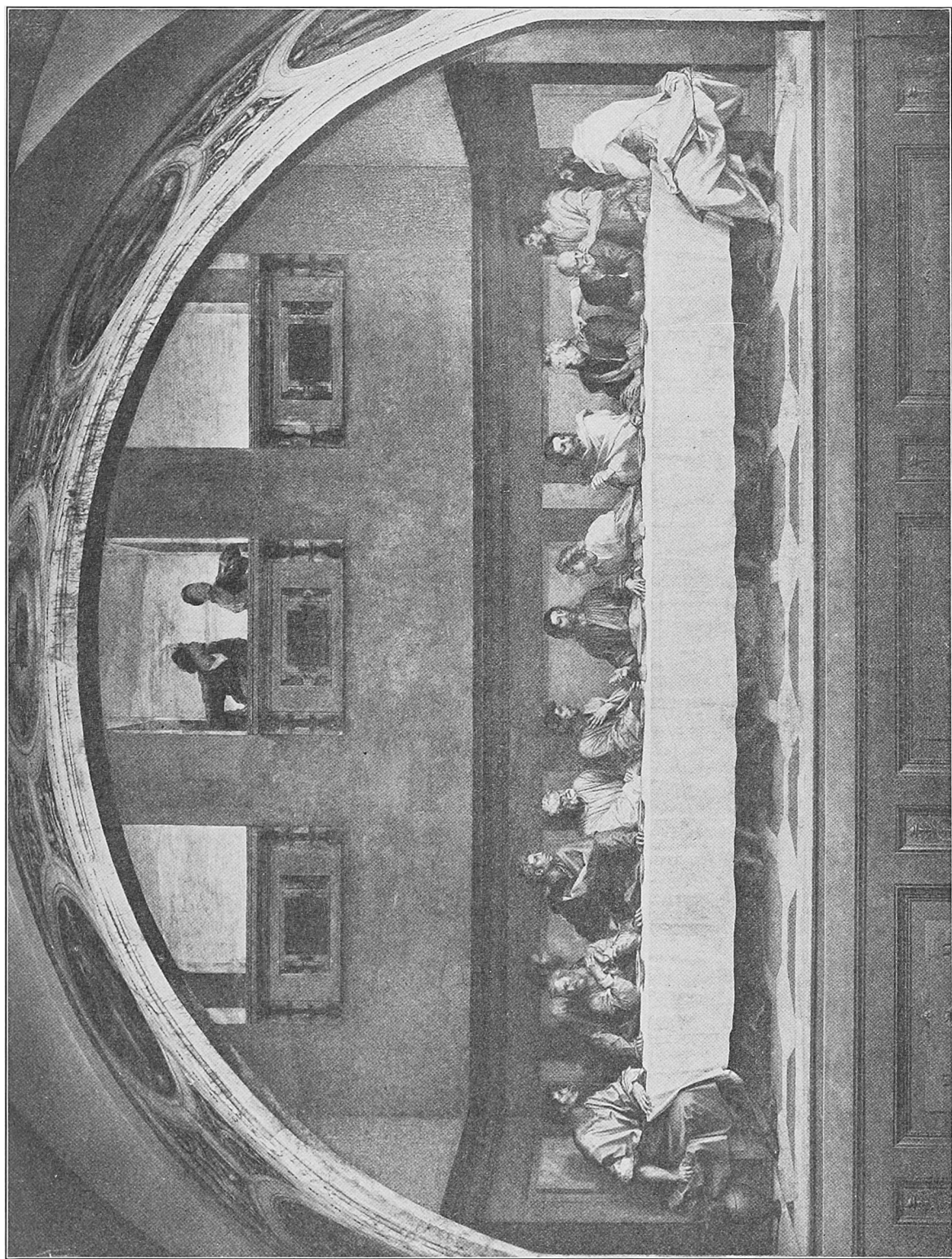
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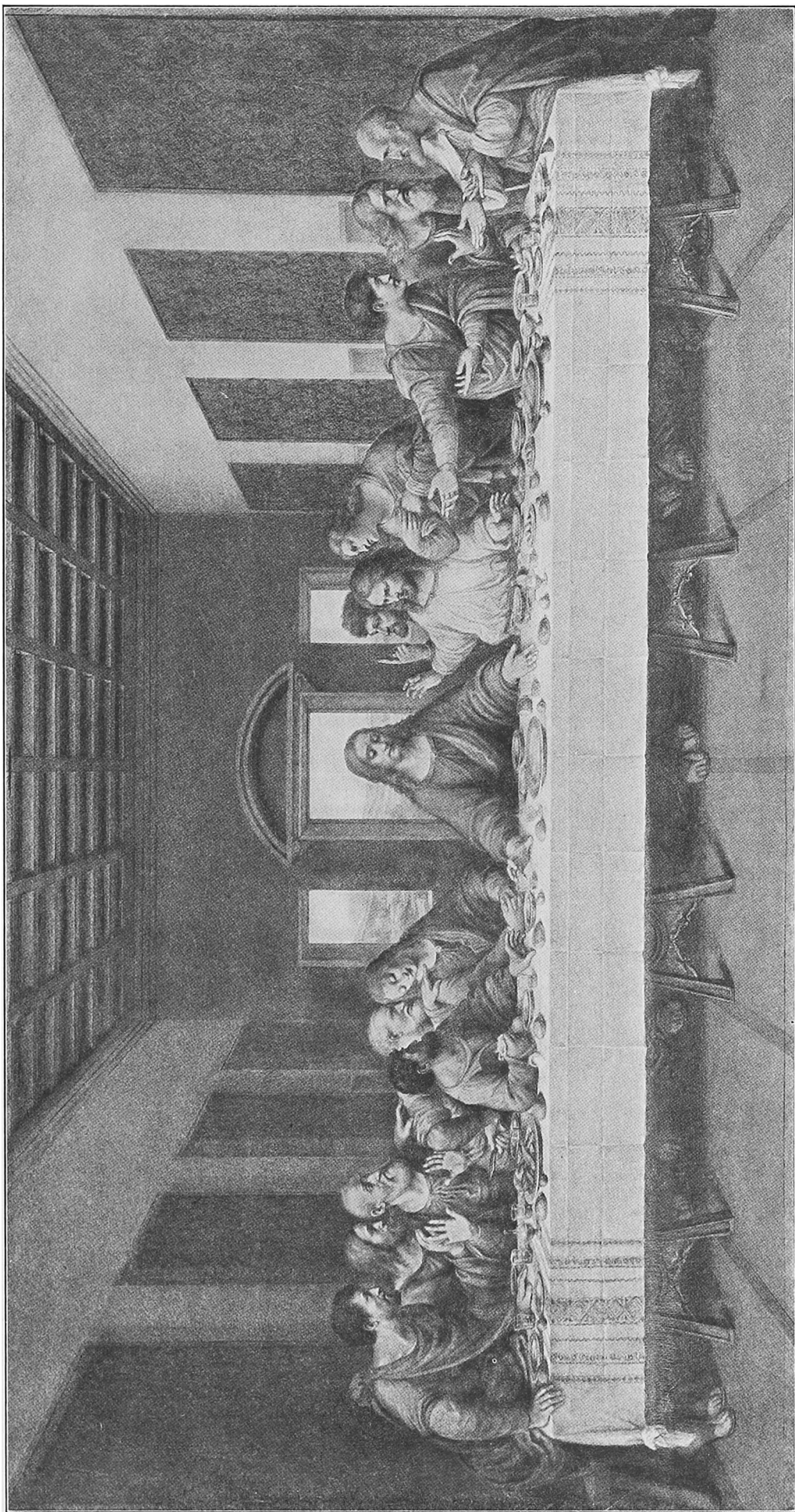
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"THE LAST SUPPER"
BY ANDREA DEL SARTO

FIG. 2. See page 31



"THE LAST SUPPER"
BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

FIG. 1. See page 31

A STANDARD OF ART MEASUREMENT

PART III

EXPRESSION

By F. WELLINGTON RUCKSTUHL

A CORRECTION

IN my chapter on Composition, published last month with an accompanying reproduction of "The Surrender of Breda" by Velasquez, I put the following legend underneath the picture: "A Faulty Composition"; but in my article I said: "As a Composition it is poor." I really intended to say: As a Composition it is Faulty.

The real impression I wished to convey was that here is one of the greatest historical pictures in the world, whose composition is faulty, marred through the violation of one of the most important laws of composition, i. e.: Concentration of Effects.

A description of the beauties of this picture would have weakened the lesson I wished to convey. Therefore I merely ignored them. Its great qualities are well known and have often been dwelled upon; but its faults are never or rarely pointed out. In order to arrive at a true valuation of any work of art it is needful to point out its faults as well as its good qualities. But in spite of this one fault—which is far more apparent when one studies the very large picture in the Prado at Madrid than it is in a small photograph—the picture is a great work of art and the masterpiece of Velasquez.

F. W. R.

WE now come to the consideration of the third element of art power—EXPRESSION.

All art may be roughly divided into Decorative and Expressive. Decorative art concerns itself principally with the expression of sensuous Beauty alone. Expressive art concerns itself with the expression of sensuous beauty—plus Ideas, Sentiments, Feelings, etc.

A truly accomplished artist, when he has chosen his subject for an expressive work of art, which usually involves figures, always expresses three things:

First, he expresses those actions or emotions which each and every figure in his composition is supposed to express both in the movement of the body and in the expression of the features. For instance, if a man is going to express Pride in a statue, he should not end by expressing Contempt, as there is a profound difference between pride and contempt. If the total action of the subject demands the expression of pride, that alone should be expressed. I call this expressiveness of the individual figures PRIMARY expression. This is consciously and deliberately produced.

Second, the great artist will express in work, as a whole, not only the requisite expression on the faces of the figures, but the *spirit* of the action or

thought which the picture is supposed to express, like the picture of "Peace" by Puvis de Chavannes in the Museum at Amiens illustrated in the March number of the magazine, in which each figure expresses peace but in which the work, as a whole, also expresses peace in its composition, tone of color, light and shade, its idealism of form or its style. I call this expressiveness of the work as a whole SECONDARY expression. This may be consciously or unconsciously produced.

Third, in every one of his works the artist—if he be true to himself and does not imitate either some master or the prevalent style and manner of his epoch—will express *himself*, his temperament, the fundamental quality of his soul, be it fine or coarse, noble or base. He will do this unconsciously, at any rate. But he may also

do this consciously and deliberately—by inventing a so-called "temperamental manner." This I call TERTIARY expression. And if the artist, I repeat, is true to his own intuitions he will execute that com-



FIG. 3. HEAD OF THE SAVIOUR.

Life size pastel drawing in the Brera Gallery, Milan

BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

position with a personal flavor different from that of any man on earth, because every tree, animal or man has a particular type or character of its own that separates him, or it, from other individuals.

Now, when an artist aims to express any subject the main thing to do is to render its *essential characteristic*. Silk has a "character" of its own. There are endless ways of painting silk and we care not how different one way of painting it is from other. The essential thing in painting silk is to make us feel that the painted silk has the essential characteristics of *all* silk. The same is true of an Oak. When an artist paints an oak tree, the needful thing for us is not his peculiar way of putting on paint, but the essential character of that tree as an oak, so that we can tell what kind of a tree we are looking at in his work.

The same thing is true of a character in history like Jesus. Jesus had a character of his own; and when we paint Jesus we should, above all things, paint that character with perfect truth—both in its physical and spiritual aspects—if we can. Supposing we had no early Byzantine portraits of Jesus, of the fifth century, like those of Ravenna, which represent Him as tradition said he looked, the artist would have to construct in his imagination an adequate portrait—adequate to truly express the Essential Character of Jesus, to such a degree at least that the world would be satisfied that such expression is truly adequate; and the power of the artist would be measured exactly by the power with which he expressed the essential characteristics of Jesus.

Tradition had informed the Byzantine artist that Jesus wore medium long hair divided in the middle, and a medium long beard; that His nose was straight or faintly aquiline, His eyes rather large and His skin of a dark brown color. These *physical* characteristics the Byzantine artist showed. But in the Ravenna mosaics the *spiritual* characteristics cannot even be guessed—they are so inadequately expressed. Thousands of men, from the unknown artists of Ravenna down to Leonardo, a period of about a thousand years, made representations of Jesus; but none before Leonardo ever expressed adequately the essential *character* of Jesus—his physical power, his intellectual elevation, his superhuman personality and, in addition to this, the spiritual mood which the world feels was the mood Jesus ought to have been in and probably was in when he said: "Verily! one of you will betray me this night!" See Fig. 3. This is a pastel, a study by Leonardo for his "Last Supper" in Milan. To make a head as expressive as this takes a larger and higher combination of

mental and spiritual faculties than to simply paint a man having the physical characteristics of Jesus as shown in the inexpressive Ravenna portraits. Hence the high rank as an art power that we must accord to the power of adequately expressing anything, above all, spiritual things!

Again, five of the greatest artists of the Renaissance chose to represent the "Last Supper," viz.: Ghirlandajo, Raphael, Leonardo, Del Sarto and Tintoretto. When we analyze the pictures by these five we find that Ghirlandajo, Raphael and Tintoretto missed absolutely the depicting of the main thing which the portrayal of the story demands—the outburst of mingled horror and anger that the words of Jesus must have caused. Ghirlandajo (Fig. 5) and Raphael (Fig. 4) show a peaceful, quiet and absolutely insignificant dinner. Nothing is really "happening." Tintoretto (Fig. 6) shows a boisterous repast where nothing significant or dramatic is happening. But in Del Sarto's picture (page 28) we see that he grasped the true sense of the subject of the "Last Supper," that is—to

represent the tumult that followed the declaration of Jesus!

But Del Sarto's work is inferior to Leonardo's (page 30) because the expression of that which was required to be expressed by the demands of the subject and the highest art, namely the essential character of Jesus and of the disciples as individuals—and of

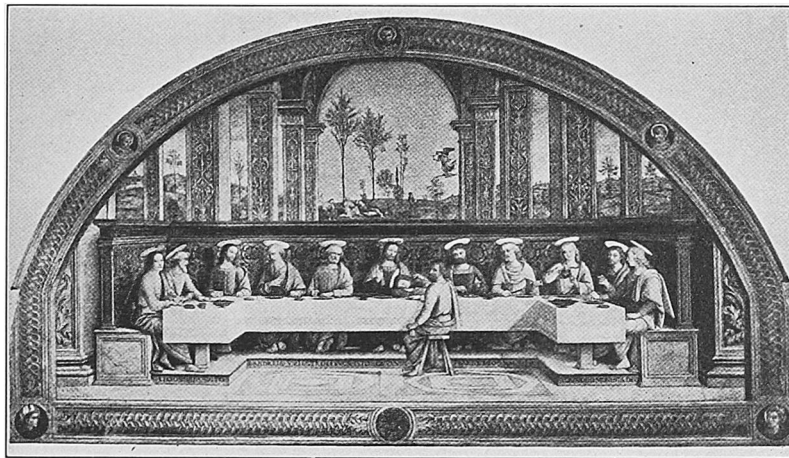


FIG. 4. "LAST SUPPER" BY RAPHAEL

their probable action under the provocative declaration of Jesus—is not only less adequately expressed than in the work by Leonardo, but is entirely inadequate.

To begin with, the head and personality of Jesus is not only not superhuman, it is even weak, while Leonardo's is strong and superhuman. Secondly, Jesus in Del Sarto's picture is so unseparate from the disciples that in a manner he is merged with the crowd, and so does not *dominate* the whole scene to the extent that a complete expression of the subject demands. See how beautifully Leonardo has separated Christ from the disciples! He has divided them into four separate groups, thus leaving Him a central pyramidal figure and making of Him not only the center of the picture but the dominant note, toward which the spectator's eye returns at all times in spite of the variety of things that tend to draw the eye to other parts of the picture. This drawing back and forward produces the *cradling* motion which I have already described in my chapter on Beauty, and which lies at the basis of all sensuous beauty. Third, the consternation that Leonardo expressed with extraordinary adequacy is lacking in Del Sarto's picture which does not represent a dramatic explosion, but merely a gentle intellectual perturbation. Moreover, in

Leonardo's picture, we see such a complete fusion of all the elements into a unified whole—such a marvelous expression of the varied emotions, characters and even personalities, of the different disciples, as indicated by the New Testament—that those who are familiar with the latter can identify the different persons. Thus we have such a wonderful grouping and movement in each figure and in the whole that we are forced to feel, there is nothing to be added or to be taken away or to be changed. It is finished!

These reasons, not to speak of others—as the lack in Del Sarto's picture of the superhuman quality which we look for in the apostles, sanctified and sublimated as they are supposed to have become by years of contact with the Son of God; the less happy composition and the introduction of the two disturbing and unnecessary figures in the upper windows—make Del Sarto's picture, even though it is superior to Ghirlandajo's, Raphael's and Tintoretto's, still far inferior to that of Leonardo. The rendering of the subject of the "Last Supper" by Leonardo's competitors scarcely rises higher than "literary illustration" while Leonardo's mounts to the level of a great, living, dramatic picture.

All of which again proves that, for a great artist when greatly emotioned, there is no such thing as a "literary subject." When he is not exalted and

brought to a high emotional, creative pitch, in spite of any technical skill—even that of Ghirlandajo, Raphael and Tintoretto combined—he can produce nothing but a mediocre work of art. And the world for these reasons has set its seal on the classification I have made.

In Milan every child knows where to find the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie where the mutilated but still wondrous fresco of Leonardo is now jealously guarded by the State; but in Rovazzano, a suburb of Florence, I had to ask several people where to find the fresco by Del Sarto in the church of San Salvi.

What makes the difference in the value of these pictures? Why does Leonardo grandly triumph over all his competitors, four of them among the greatest artists of all time, and lift himself here, in this one picture—the greatest work he ever produced—to the equal of the greatest artist the world ever saw?—power of expression, *adequate expression* of the salient characteristics demanded to be expressed by a complete rendering of the possibilities of the subject!

Taine says: "Thus the purpose of a work of art is to render the Essential Character, or at least

an important characteristic of the object, to make it as dominating and also as visible as possible; and, for that, the artist prunes the traits which hide and obscure that characteristic, chooses those which manifest it, corrects those in which it is changed and reconstructs those in which it is annulled. And then he gives his definition of a work of Art thus: "The work of art has for its aim the manifestation of some essential or salient characteristic and therefore some important idea, more clearly and more completely than they are manifested by real objects. It accomplishes this by employing an assemblage of parts, bound together, of which it systematically modifies the relations. In the three imitative arts: sculpture, painting and poetry, these ensembles correspond to real objects."

While this is no "definition" of art at all, it is a masterly definition of the process by which great art is arrived at or produced.

To make this still more clear, and to show how an artist by a systematic modification of the relation of parts; as Taine says, creates a great and expressive work of art, let me refer to the matter of expression of Motion and Emotion.

In his "Meaning of Pictures" John C. Van Dyke says: "A modern athlete in the gymnasium is a very different athlete from

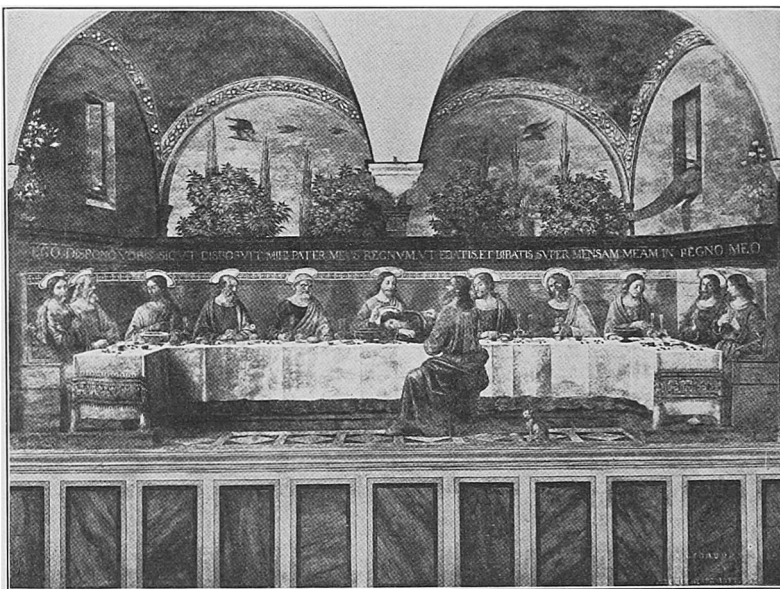


FIG. 5. "LAST SUPPER" BY GHIRLANDAJO

those that writhe upon the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Did not Michael Angelo's imagination see the model abnormally and thus persuade his hand to emphasize all the powerful attribute? The running horse as seen by the instantaneous camera is no doubt accurate enough in all respects, save the *sense of motion*. But he does not run. The camera arrests his flight, holds him poised in air momentarily. But Fromentin's imagination, as shown in his pictures, saw the horse running, saw him distorted, drawn out in body from head to tail. You know from the report of the camera, again, how human beings fall through the air in jumping, diving, plunging; but what a different report you get from Tintoretto's fall of the damned in his "Last Judgment"! There is a tremendous rain of elongated bodies falling from heaven to hell. The exaggeration of the imagination is here most apparent. But the result is wonderfully effective. We are made to feel that the bodies are really falling."

This is what I call Expression, not camera copying, which is impotent to represent for us the sense of motion. This is the adequate expression of motion, the imagination having called up elon-

gated bodies and so placed them and drawn them in a slightly exaggerated form that they convey to us, because of this slight exaggeration, a feeling of motion in the bodies. This is what Taine means by "systematic modification of the relations of parts." To get the motion, it may be needful to elongate the bodies while leaving the rest of the frame exactly as in nature, or it may require a slight lengthening of the legs while leaving the rest of the body as in nature. When the modification is done to such a degree merely that we are aware only of the motion, and not of the modifications, we call it adequate emphasis. When, however, the modification is made to such a degree that we notice it, the effect of true motion is not reached and we then call it Exaggeration.

This is what we call Expression in art, to press out, to bring to a clearer view, the things in nature or in our conceptions and ideas. What is true of life and bodily motion is true of thought and soul emotion. The facial movements by which we express our spiritual emotions can not be adequately caught and represented by the camera, as photographs of simulations of the emotions such as rage, hate, joy and laughter prove. Only a great artist can so wisely emphasize in a work of art the movements of our facial muscles as to make the human face adequately express the emotions of the soul. That is why a great work of art will always be superior to the most skilful photograph.

So far I have dealt only with Primary Expression, with that phase, namely, by which it is easy to see what ideas or emotions the artist aimed to express by direct methods of drawing and modeling in the bodies and faces of his figures.

Let us now speak of Secondary Expression, of the expression of a work as a whole, through its General Tone and character and the *spirit* that radiates from it. This is usually not perceived in a work upon a first inspection of it, whether the work be in poetry, music, painting or sculpture.

When we carefully look at the "Sistine Madonna" by Raphael we notice: not only do the faces of the Madonna and of the Christ child look spiritual and supra-human, but all the figures have a something spiritual and supra-human about them; in addition thereto the whole atmosphere of the picture has something super-mundane about it. Independent of its parts, the picture as a whole seems to radiate spirituality. This cumulative and general expression of the entire work, as distinguished from the

partial and particular expression of the parts of the work I call Secondary Expression.

In his really interesting book just mentioned "The Meaning of Pictures" Mr. Van Dyke has a chapter on "Pictorial Poetry" in which he admirably suggests this element of secondary expression of spirit, character and feeling, by the suggestion an artist may make of things that can not be expressed in the *parts* of a work, either in words, sound or paint. He shows that in reading Shakespeare's "Lear," for example, we feel a whole world of sadness that seems to fill the spaces between the lines and to ooze out of the very type and pervade the whole play. And so, from Fra Angelico's conventionally drawn and often primitively colored angels there radiates a sense, an aroma of religious feeling which we *feel* more than we *see* in them, when compared with more ambitious pictures. And about Wagner's music he says: "Consider once again Wagner's 'Götterdämmerung'!

How would it be possible to tell with musical notes all the tragic power that lies in that opera? What he did was to summon up a romantic mood of mind by contemplating the theme in his imagination, and then to suggest by the choice of motives and orchestration the immense passion of the story. By following the orchestration



FIG. 6. "LAST SUPPER" BY TINTORETTO

rather than the individual singers—that is the whole rather than the parts—you can feel in the different motifs the poetry of that heroic age, the glorious achievements, the sad passing, the mournful sunset, the fading into oblivion of those who ruled the beautiful world. If you cannot *feel* the mystery of the sadness, the splendor of it all, I am afraid it argues some want of music and romance in your soul, rather than a want of poetry in the opera.

"The feeling is there; it is the last thing perhaps to be recognized by the student of music, and yet it is the one thing above all others that has made Wagner a great poet. He could suggest more than he could describe, and because he suggests and does not describe is one reason why he is, at first, so difficult to understand."

I have quoted this entire page because it is one of the best things in a good book. And it puts into clear language what I mean by Secondary in contradistinction to Primary Expression.

Now as to Tertiary Expression. After the Conscious expression by the artist of the essential characteristics of *parts* of a picture and of the picture as a whole comes the unconscious expression—of the Personality or Character of the artist him-

self, as an essential part of a great work of art. And here we come again to the great question of "individualism."

Let me say, first of all, that I am not opposed to "individualism" in art since it is an integral part of all truly great art. But I shall try to show its rational limits. We have a lot of photographers today, who combine science and taste to such a degree as to almost justify that contradiction in terms: art-photographers. Suppose one of these photographers were to find a suitable hall, and place in it a table, and seat round it thirteen of the greatest actors in the world and have them act out that explosion of feeling in the Last Supper, which, logically, must have followed the declaration of Jesus: "Verily, I say unto you, one of you will this night betray me!" and then photograph them. The effect, perhaps, would be a very interesting photograph. But it would be utterly mechanical, utterly inadequate as an expression and, in addition, it would lack that human quality which tells us it was made by the hand of a man. And it would not be a record of the activity of the intellectual faculties of some one great man.

Not only do we flee monotony—because it kills—but we seek novelty and surprises as often as possible. Even a disagreeable surprise is relished, retrospectively, when we return to an agreeable condition. But nothing gives us so much joy as a truly agreeable surprise. That is the secret of our love of beautiful art. In the first place we are surprised by the beauty and power of a work of art, then by its originality. Finally, when we have drunk sufficiently of this surprising beauty, we get an additional joy in marveling over the extraordinary combination of artistic faculties which enabled the artist to produce it. But we do not concern ourselves about this, until after we have been surprised and emotioned by the work itself!

Véron made a great mistake when he said: "If we give ourselves the trouble to analyse the exclamations and criticisms of the crowd which visits the museums on Sunday, we will recognize that, at bottom, and in spite of the forms of their judgment, that which they admire or censure is truly not the more or less exactitude of the imitation, but the greater or less talent they attribute to the authors of these representations. The picture or statue is nothing but the point of departure, and the opportunity for their being emotioned, and this admiration can always be resumed in this: "What talent it must have taken to produce such a work of art!" and the following: "We can dig and analyse all we like, at the bottom of this admiration we will find nothing else. Whether we wish it or not, that which we praise is not the work, but the workman."

In the first place this is not true. We never begin to think about the artist of any work, I repeat, until we have been conquered by the work itself; and second, it is not true that the only thing which we praise is the workman and not the work. The fact is, most people of the great public do not think of the artist at all at first, nor his talent. To them a work of art is at first an utterly impersonal affair. It is only long after they have been charmed or captivated by the work that they become interested in the true personality of

the artist, or his methods of working, or his character as a man. We love to discover that the man who made a great work of art which we love was a great man, at least at the moment when he was dominated so completely by his subject as to have become a docile tool in the hands of some mysterious power which worked through him. Hence we often pardon the failings of men of genius—even though we should not—in the presence of those works which they engendered in moments of exalted emotion and creative activity. When then we learn that the artist was consistently a decent, manly man, as were Titian, Raphael and Michelangelo, with no radical vices, we make of them our spiritual companions and love them more and more. But let it not be forgotten that the most important thing to express in a work of great art is the essential and salient characteristic of the subject or idea; and that, if we also care to see it expressed in a personal manner, that personal manner, whether it be modest or striking, must first of all be genuine, and it must be original with the artist; for the imitating of any other artist in style or manner is not great art at all and is a hypocritical act!

Finally, this tertiary expression, of the "personality" of an artist, should enter into his work *unconsciously*. He should not be so eagerly bent on stamping his personality on his works as to induce him to choose even an ugly subject or an immoral one, merely as a pretext for expressing in a flamboyant way his personality or manner and so, fall into an absurd extreme, which perhaps, at first, is the result merely of impetuosity but is finally resolved into a new philosophy of art, as has been the case with the "modernists" and their followers in their "deformation of the form." For by attracting attention only to the tertiary expression, of the personality of the artist and his tricks of technique, the artist draws his spectator away from the essential thing in any work of art—the adequate primary expression of the salient and essential characteristic of the subject of that work and of the secondary or total expression of the work as a whole, and so produces a negation of great art.

I will close this chapter by once more quoting from the individualistic Véron. In speaking of the evolution of the different phases of poetic art he says: "These collective products of the race naturally bear the characteristics and the sentiments of the race. It is still impersonal art in the sense that it belongs to no poet in particular, it is national art.

"After that is born a new art, or rather a new form of art, which is that of Modern times. Art then becomes self-conscious and above all distinguishes itself from the earlier art. The personality of the artist accentuates itself more and more, and sometimes *becomes so exaggerated* as to be the *very negation of art itself*, until it arrives at the fatiguing vanity which substitutes, for the expression of sincere and spontaneous feeling, the selfish preoccupation of the poet longing for "success." (*Italics are mine.*)

"In fact it is not impossible that an artist born with a disordered and maladive imagination puts himself thereby beyond the pale of normal conditions and condemns himself, at once, to be mis-

understood by the public. Impressions too personal, eccentricities of feeling, bizarreries of processes and of execution, without taking away the intrinsic value of the inspiration of the work, can impress upon it a character so strong and peculiar that it becomes impossible to estimate its merits. The exaggeration of the best qualities changes them into defects. Personality, which, when added to imitation, makes of it a work of art, transforms it into a puzzle—when it is pushed to the extreme of bizarrerie."

The main thing, for an artist working in "expressive" art, is to "get it over to the public," as they say in the theater. The dramatist is as much concerned with "parading his personality" before the public as a poet, painter or sculptor, but he never *obtrudes* it, when he stages his play, between the public and his drama. He hides behind the curtain until he has "put over to the public" the emotions, either of laughter or tears, with which he wishes to arouse the audience to the pitch that will force it to call him before the curtain. To "get it over the footlights" he will suppress everything in his play that is not as clear as crystal and easily understandable in order to "economize the attention," as Herbert Spencer says, of the audience. When any peculiarities of language or action were not clear and quick-acting on the emotions of his cook—(to whom he read most of his plays first)—they were suppressed by Molière. That suppression did not denude his immortal comedies of his personality.

Shakespeare made some capital mistakes in some of his plays by forgetting this law. He, perhaps unconsciously, put so much of his personality into those, that he did not "get his stuff over"—hence they always have been unplayable. Only those plays in which he suppressed his personality to the rational limits and so made them universal are great, are played today and will always be played.

What is true of the drama is true of poetry. Homer is read universally because of the clarity and lack of exaggerated "personality" in his work. We need no "Homer Clubs" to expound the Iliad. But Browning so forced the personal note as to engender Browning Clubs—now about all dead—to explain him and his works. Hence most of those works of his which needed explaining are disappearing down the wind and will be forgotten as time goes on, and by-and-by we will have expurgated editions of his poems.

Why should not the same law hold good in sculpture and painting? The painter who is so ego-maniacal as to care more for the parading of his "personality" and "temperament" than the stirring of the emotions of the public by expressing his subject should never go beyond the purely decorative arts. There is the proper field for "showing off" his clever "chic" artistry and "technique," his novelty of invention and peculiarity of manner. In purely Decorative art we rather welcome such an exhibition of variety and self-revelation. But in Expressive art we must have the chosen subject so respected and so adequately expressed, so devoid of all peculiarities of language, of form or technique that we do not think of those things—until after we have been truly emotioned by the work. So many artists early in life become lost and so obsessed with the foolish idea that the manifesta-

tion of a personal technique is the first and main thing in art, that they never learn that the fundamental law of all great and enduring art is: "Suppress your ego!"

Every artist is already an art personality—merely by virtue of having enough love for art to devote the energies of his life to it; for it is a path in which there is small chance of gain as compared with other avenues of activity. And, as nature never makes two men exactly alike, by virtue of that law alone he is already an originality, a personality; and the more true he is to himself, the more will he accentuate that personality. And the best way for an artist in expressive art to lose this individuality is: to constantly think about it; while to forget it is not only the best way of preserving it, but of enlarging it and stamping it on his work. Jesus said: "He that loseth his life shall find it." Hence, the best way for an artist to increase the evidence of his being a truly strong and markedly original personality is to think only of one thing: to make the most original, the noblest and the most beautiful work of art he can out of every subject he dares to handle; not to please the critics or dilettanti or to sell his stuff; nor to get the applause of his fellow artists for a few years—all of which he should ignore—but to delight the public, to lift us to the sublime or to lead mankind upward, if ever so little, across the ages! Not by self-seeking and the using of his fellow-men as a means to notoriety, but by self-forgetting and grandly serving the race will he reach a durable place in the hearts of mankind, the only ambition worthy of a real man!

Thus his personality will ooze out of him into his work, unconsciously, and then radiate from his work like the perfume of a rose, and the loftier his aim, the nobler he becomes in soul, the more skilful he becomes in the using of his tools, the more will that personal "touch," individual manner and originality of style become striking and be expressed in all his work. As Renan said: "The qualities which make good writers are the same as those which make good Saints. Self-love and the anxiety to shine are capital defects, be it a question of religious morality or be it a question of elocution. Forgetting oneself, the contempt of mere success, are the rules for salvation in all kinds of art."

Finally—though it should be hardly needed—I will say: an artist must not go to the other extreme. When an artist thinks too much of his "thought," idea or sentiment; is too much bent on expressing and on driving home the importance of his religious or social sermon to the neglect of the six elements of art power that we are considering, he falls into the bog of incomplete art, like that of Hogarth and Blake in England; or Orcagna and Giotto in Italy; Wierz of Belgium, of Cornelius of Bavaria and of most of the early Flemish and Dutch artists. If I must choose between a thoughtless decoration, full of supreme artistic power and beauty, and an uncouth, childish, weak expression of supreme spirituality, I will choose the former and so will the world in the long run—provided the decoration is clean in spirit. For in art goodness and truth without Power and Beauty have no value of any kind. While many *works* become sacred through their Beauty.

But while this is true, it is more true that some-

thing beside mere Form must be expressed. "For the essence of all artistic beauty is Expression, which cannot be when there is really nothing to be expressed." And therefore the third element of art power—Expression, is the most important of

all. That is to say—other things being equal, that is the greatest work of art in which we find the most adequate and profound Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Expression.

F. W. Ruckstuhl

BIRDS AS A UNIVERSAL APPEAL

BY T. GILBERT PEARSON

IN all ages mankind has regarded the wild bird-life as highly important to the best interests. In the ancient days birds were thought to possess supernatural powers which of course rendered them objects worthy of the keenest interest and the fullest mead of reverence.

"Beloved Picker, send elsewhere all black thick clouds over great swamps, high woods and wide wastes, but give to us ploughmen and sowers a fertile season and sweet rain." Thus, according to Johann Gutsloff, did the old Esthonian farmer lift his prayer to the woodpecker god whose power over thunder and rain was not to be doubted. Sweet are the blessings of gentle rainfall and beloved was the bird that brought it to the furrowed fields of the ancient dwellers on the Baltic. Among the Germans a story lingers that the woodpecker alone knows where grows the magic flower of the *spring-wurzel*, without which no one can hope to gather the treasure locked in the vaults of Venusberg. With the aid of this bird wealth and happiness may come to the humblest of men. Pliny recounts that the ancient Romans held the woodpecker in great reverence and many a Latin artist figured a youth with this bird on his head.

Great then was the woodpecker in the minds of many men who lived and wrought in the dim beginnings of what we call history. To some he brought bountiful harvests, to others the possibility of wealth beyond dreams of kings, and as the fit companion of Picus, who was ever young, he typified clearly the beauty of youth. Food, wealth and youth; surely naught else is lacking save love!

But when was ever love forgotten? Never by the birds, that is sure, for throughout the shifting fortunes of mankind they have ever flown, bearing swiftly the message of undying affection and giving aid to lovers in time of need. Even their images have often been of great potency. When, according to the ancient Finns, Ilmarinen, son of the air, started on his journey to woo and captivate the lovely maid of the North, his preparations were most complete. Nothing was overlooked that might insure success. Of this we are fully assured when we read the orders he gave as to the preparation of his sleigh:

Take the fleetest of my racers,
Put the gray steed in the harness,
Hitch him to my sleigh of magic.
Place six cuckoos on the break-board,
Seven bluebirds on the crossbow,
Thus to charm the northland maidens,
Thus to make them look and listen
As the cuckoos call and echo.

With singing cuckoo sleighbells what maiden forsooth could resist him? For the cuckoo, let us not forget, was, according to C. de Kay, the marriage bird, and so looked upon by all the people of that frosty land. Wander where one will through the mazes of ancient lore—and at every turn one will see evidences, numerous and unmistakable, that

early man in all lands held birds in high esteem and attributed to them the powers of bringing more abundantly the blessings of life.

To-day intelligent men and women entertain similar sentiments, but their interest in the birds rests on a different basis. We regard them not as supernatural beings, but as among the most practical of human helpers. They slay the caterpillars and the weevils, they consume the grasshopper, the aphid and the bark-borers. The waving fields are gladdened thereby, the forests clap their leaves in the sunlight and the law-makers rise up and proclaim a protectorate over the birds. For these things we are duly appreciative, but after all we do not love the birds because of their economic value on earth. Our affection springs rather from an appreciation of their æsthetic influence on our lives, and this of course is because we know them so much better than did the early fathers of the race. For instance: we do not believe with Aristotle that there once lived a bird "as large as a bustard that laid its eggs in the skin of a hare" and we know that Pliny was mistaken when he wrote that ostriches clutch up stones with their feet and "hurl them back as they run, against those that chase them." On the other hand we do know a thousand things about the migration and home life of birds that neither of these worthies ever dreamed existed. And just as the more one knows of a strange people the better one likes them, just so the more we have learned of the ways of the wild birds the more we are drawn to them. Who is there that, seeing a hummingbird poised before a flower in his garden, realizes the fact that since the season when last the flowers bloomed this little mite of feathered life has twice crossed the Gulf of Mexico, who, I say, is there that will not then and there feel a warm impulse of sympathy and interest for the well-being of this diminutive voyageur of the air? Who is there with soul so calloused that, when in spring a soft trumpeting *honk* falls from the clouds above, and gazing upward sees a living arrowhead of mighty birds winging its way toward the frozen pole, does not feel the rush of a thrill that only the migrating wild geese can bring?

There is in this country to-day a pronounced sentiment for birds to which our forefathers were strangers. I am not speaking of the occasional maudlin sentimentality that weeps at sight of the word "quail" printed on a bill-of-fare. I have in mind that kind of sentiment which causes a man or woman to rush to the telephone upon viewing the first bluebird of spring and shout the glad news to a neighbor; the sort of sentiment that rejoices when the robins come and when the first blue eggs appear, that harkens to the call of the chickadee and is deeply moved when the veery sounds his silvery pipings in the twilight. The man or woman stirred by this kind of a sentiment really loves birds and loves them understandingly, because his